



U.S. AIR FORCE

## This Week in USAF and PACAF History 18 – 24 June 2012



20 June 1941 **The War Department established the Army Air Forces** under Maj. Gen. Henry H. Arnold. It encompassed both the Office of the Chief of the Air Corps, responsible for research, development, supply, and maintenance, and Air Force Combat Command (formerly General Headquarters Air Force), responsible for doctrine and operational training.

21 June 1944 **Operation FRANTIC** was a plan for American bombers launching from the Mediterranean or England to strike Germany and then shuttle on to bases in the Soviet Union. The concept would allow American bombers to reach targets deeper in Germany, divert Luftwaffe air support away from western approaches, and provide additional cover for battles on the eastern front. American strategists also hoped that the operation would forge closer ties with the USSR and encourage Stalin to allow access to Siberian air bases for use against Japan. After some successful missions out of Italy, an England-based B-17 force raided synthetic fuel plants near Berlin on 21 June. However, a Luftwaffe He-111 bomber shadowed the B-17s to their Russian base. At midnight that night, the Luftwaffe sent well over 100 bombers to drop flares and attack the B-17s, destroying or damaging about 70 American bombers. Soviet air defenses did very little to oppose the raid, and Operation Frantic ended.



Russian military personnel in front of a damaged B-17 at Poltava, Russia (22 Jun 1944)



Two Russian pilots flank a US maintenance officer in front of a Soviet P-39



23-24 June 1952 Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps aircraft in coordinated attacks virtually destroyed all the **hydroelectric power plants of North Korea**. The two-day operation, involving over 1,200 sorties, was the largest single air effort since World War II. (At left, the bombing of a DPRK dam during the Korean War.) This bombing campaign was designed to apply political pressure against the Communists at a time of stalemate in both the ground war and the truce talks.



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18 June 1965 **ARC LIGHT begins.** Thirty B-52Fs from Andersen AFB, Guam, refueled by 30 KC-135s, bombed a Viet Cong stronghold near Saigon. This was the first use of B-52s in combat – the first bombs dropped by B-52s in war. However, Two B-52s were lost in a collision in the air refueling area.



In the first three years of operations in Vietnam, B-52s flew more than 25,000 sorties and dropped more than 630,000 tons of bombs. Enemy ground forces could not see or hear approaching B-52s, which typically released bombs from 30,000 feet.

19 June 1970 The **Minuteman III missile first became operational** at Minot AFB, North Dakota. The missile had been airlifted to Minot in April and placed in its silo a few days later. Minuteman III's went on alert in August. Each Minuteman III carries three independently targetable warheads. The LGM-30G Minuteman III is the only operational land-based ICBM in the United States' inventory. The photos show Minuteman III tests launched from Vandenberg AFB, California.



OPR: PACAF/HO



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19 June 1973 The United States Congress passed the **Case-Church Amendment** banning any further U.S. military involvement in Southeast Asia, effective August 15, 1973. The veto-proof vote was 278-124 in the House and 64-26 in the Senate. On 14 August, U.S. bombing of Khmer Rouge forces in Cambodia was halted in accordance with the ban.

With U.S. airpower gone, North Vietnam invaded and conquered South Vietnam in 1975.

20 June 1976 **Final U.S. Base Closures in Thailand.** The last two U.S. facilities in Thailand closed – U Tapao Royal Thai Naval Air Field and the Ramasun electronic monitoring facility. The last scheduled C-130 service from U Tapao departed on 19 June. At U Tapao, facilities valued at an estimated \$102 million were given to the Thais. After nearly 26 years, the U.S. Military Assistance Command Thailand also ceased to exist.

18 June 1981 The **F-117 Nighthawk**, the world's first stealth combat aircraft, flew for the first time at Tonopah Test Range, Nevada. The revolutionary aircraft presented very little radar image.

The theory of stealthy (low radar cross-section) aircraft was developed in the 1960s by scientists in several nations, but the actual designs of stealth aircraft were inherently unstable. With American advances in flight computers and software, stealthy aircraft designs became practical. The decision to develop the F-117 was made in 1973, and the decision to produce the aircraft was made in 1978.



19 June 2006 The **first C-5M test aircraft** made its first flight at Edwards AFB. The former C-5B received a complete avionics modernization, reliability enhancement, and new engines.

19-23 June 2006 **Exercise VALIANT SHIELD** was conducted as the largest joint exercise in the Western Pacific. Over 290 aircraft, three carrier strike groups and approximately 22,000 U.S. military personnel participated in the exercise. VALIANT SHIELD focused on joint training among U.S. military forces while responding to a range of mission scenarios. B-2 and B-52 bombers; F-15C, F-15E, F-16CJ, and F/A-18 fighters; E-3 AWACS aircraft as well as KC-10 and KC-135 tankers launched from Andersen AFB to support exercise events.

